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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 004610

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [CVIS](#) [KU](#) [ISLAMISTS](#)  
SUBJECT: ISLAMIC AFFAIRS UNDERSECRETARY: MODERATION  
CONFERENCE SUCCESSFUL, INVITES FURTHER U.S. ENGAGEMENT

REF: A. KUWAIT 4467  
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 4416  
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 4389  
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 4178  
[1](#)E. KUWAIT 3650  
[1](#)F. KUWAIT 3169

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Adel Al-Falah told the DCM on December 5 that the Ministry's recent conference in Washington had been a great success, though he provided few details about the proceedings. He said the Ministry is looking forward to holding another conference in the U.S. in 2007 and requested suggestions from the USG of people who could participate in preparatory workshops. Al-Falah rebutted domestic criticism of the moderation project, saying that Islamist leaders were jealous of the Ministry's success as a leader in Islamic affairs in Kuwait. The Minister briefed the DCM about the moderation training program for imams and offered to provide Post with the training materials. Al-Falah asked the USG to reconsider its refusal to issue a visa to Dr. Essam Al-Bashir, head of the Ministry's World Moderation Center (refs A and C). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) The DCM met with Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Adel Al-Falah on December 5 at the headquarters of the World Moderation Center to get a readout of the conference the Ministry held in Washington from November 17 - 19. Al-Falah was very pleased with the conference and said nearly all the Ministry's goals were achieved. He said bringing together so many important American Muslim leaders was a significant achievement in itself and that the conference put special emphasis on Muslims being good citizens in the countries where they live. He provided few details on the conference proceedings, but promised to provide some documentation at a later date. Mutlaq Rashid Al-Qarawi, Assistant Undersecretary for Holy Quran, Islamic Studies, and Hajj Affairs, said American Muslims were pleasantly surprised that the conference was substantive and provided a fresh, productive look at Islam rather than the usual rhetoric. Both Al-Qarawi and Al-Falah noted that attendees were very enthusiastic about another such conference in the U.S. and asked that it occur within the next year. Al-Falah suggested holding several workshops before the convening of the next conference in the U.S. and asked that the U.S. suggest names of Americans who could participate.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Al-Falah said the moderation project would continue moving forward though it might have to slow down because of pressure from the National Assembly. He said that while most MPs support the moderation project, some are "jealous" of the Ministry's success in Islamic outreach.

These MPs, according to Al-Falah, see the Ministry's success as a threat to their status as Islamic leaders and therefore make petty criticisms of the Ministry in order to bolster their own Islamic credentials. (Note: Many MPs have criticized what they see as lavish amounts spent on this and other conferences. End Note.) In a separate meeting with PolOff on December 6, Shi'a MP Hassan Jowhar sharply criticized the moderation project, saying the speakers at the moderation conferences were "all extremists". This sentiment is shared by many Kuwaiti liberals.

¶4. (C/NF) The DCM asked for more information on the Ministry's program to train imams in moderation (ref B). Al-Falah recounted how a previous Awqaf Minister, faced with a shortage of Islamic studies graduates, began to recruit imams from other fields of study. Lacking proper training and context, these imams were more likely to have extremist interpretations of terms such as "Jihad." He pointed to engineering and medical students as especially dangerous since they are smart but have incomplete knowledge. The imam training, Al-Falah said, was designed to fill in the gaps in some imams' intellectual backgrounds. He offered to provide Post with all the training materials as well as video of the training sessions.

¶5. (C/NF) Al-Falah made special note of the Ministry's disappointment that World Moderation Leader Dr. Essam Al-Bashir did not receive a visa. He said that Al-Bashir had extensive connections and a distinguished background and had "a very clear picture of moderation in his mind." Al-Falah stressed that Al-Bashir would be a key part of all future moderation activities. The DCM noted that background information on Al-Bashir made a visa impossible. Al-Falah appealed to the U.S. to forgive a person for what he might

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have done in his youth.

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